

Family Investment Administration
Request for Proposals
For
Administration of the Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) and the Electric
Universal Service Program (EUSP)
FIA/OHEP/09-002-S

Questions and Responses to Pre-Proposal Conference

Question 1: List of Items, Schedule of Requirements, Scope of Work, Terms of Reference, Bill of Materials required.

Response: See Section III – Specifications, for information regarding Requirements (3.4), Background (3.1), Scope of the Project (3.2), Terms of Reference (1.8 and 3.1). There is no specified List of Items or Bill of Materials in this RFP.

Question 2: Soft Copy of the Tender Document through email.

Response: Copies of this Request for Proposals can be obtained through the DHR website at www.dhr.state.md.us or eMaryland Marketplace at www.emarylandmarketplace.com.

Question 3: Names of countries that will be eligible to participate in this tender.

Response: Any country can participate.

Question 4: Information about the Tendering Procedure and Guidelines

Response: All necessary information is incorporated in the RFP.

Question 5: Estimated Budget for this Purchase

Response: To make the process competitive, this information is not given to Offerors.

Question 6: Any Extension of Bidding Deadline?

Response: Any extensions will be posted on eMM and the DHR websites.

Question 7: Any Addendum or Pre Bid meeting Minutes?

Response: Any Addendum will be posted on eMM and the DHR website. While there are no Pre-Bid meeting Minutes the Transcript of the Pre-Proposal Conference, Agenda, all

questions and responses and the list of attendees will be posted on eMM and the DHR web page.

Question 8: Does this Program fall under this Proposal?

Response: The Electric Universal Service Program and Maryland Energy Assistance Program is the subject of this Proposal.

Question 9: What are the requirements for establishing electronic application files?

Response: The application files are created in the existing OHEP Data System.

Question 10: What are the requirements for application intake at off-site locations? Hard-copy? Electronic? Web?

Response: Offerors are responsible for developing application Intake at off-site locations (see RFP Section 3.2). Intake may be through hard copy, but all applications are entered in the data system.

Question 11: What are the requirements for secured access to the OHEP database system? VPN? Direct?

Response: The CISCO VPN Client is required to access the OHEP Database system along with a VPN login and password in addition to the OHEP login and password.

Question 12: What supplies are provided for mailing determinations?

Response: None. The Contractor provides the supplies.

Question 13: What additional items are mailed with determinations?

Response: No additional items are required to be mailed with the determinations. Any additional items are at the discretion of the Contractor.

Question 14: How are applications received by the reviewer from the initial intake worker? Hard-copy? Electronic? Web?

Response: Applications are certified by reviewing the hard copy and comparing it to what is in the database system. The certification process is completed in the database.

Question 15: How are shelter applications received by the reviewer for approval? Hard-copy? Electronic? Web?

Response: All shelter applications are hard copy. There is no electronic aspect to shelter applications.

Question 16: How are shelters notified about benefit determinations?

Response: The Contractor sends a benefit check and cover letter to the shelter.

Question 17: What are requirements for the OHEP database system to receive electronic transmissions for fiscal reporting?

Response: The OHEP database does not receive any fiscal data.

Question 18: What connectivity options are available/possible?

Response: Current connectivity is via an existing T-1 connection to the network, ISDN line, or VPN. In the case of VPN Internet access is required to be supplied by the Contractor. The T-1 connection is only available at locations currently shared with existing DHR facilities.

Question 19: Are existing processing facilities already established in proposed locations?

Response: There are existing facilities under the current Contracts. However, a new Contractor is expected to establish its own facility, as the current facilities are not DHR owned.

Question 20: Reference Section 1.1. In this section you refer to the fact that contracts will be awarded separately per County. This brings up several questions:

- 1) Assuming we submit separate (but equivalent proposals, altered only for price differences based on volume) will they be evaluated by a single committee?
- 2) Is it possible that we could be awarded a single contract, but not others, despite the similarity of our proposal as noted in Q1A above?

- 3) Given the fact that these awards will be made separately, have you considered the fact that awarding a single contract would allow significant economies of scale in 'back-office' processing, operations and management. This would reduce the overall cost of administering the program.

Response: **1) A single committee will evaluate all proposals. See Section 5.1 - Evaluation Procedures.**

2) Yes, a single award will be made per jurisdiction. See RFP Section I.1 - Objective of Request for Proposals.

3) Yes, this was considered. An Offeror is not prohibited from providing service in all 14 jurisdictions.

Question 21: Reference Section 2.10 E. You mention that a supply of applications will be provided within 30 days. Will you continue to supply all brochure needs during the life of the program, or is that the responsibility of the Contractor?

Response: **State OHEP will supply the official brochure and applications, see RFP Section 3.2.**

Question 22: Reference Section 2.3.1. In this section you reference 1% as the MBE factor? Is the 1% accurate? It seems very low compared to other recent RFP's in the Public Sector space.

Response: **Yes, the MBE goal of 1% of the total contract dollar amount is correct, see RFP Section 2.31.**

Question 23: Reference Section 3.2. What defines a successful outreach program? How can we budget for this, when we only have very loose guidelines as to what is required on an annual basis?

Response: **A successful Outreach Plan is one that fulfills the requirements of Section 3.2 A, submitted in the format in Attachment GG.**

Question 24: In Section 3.2B6 you mention printing and mailing of notices. Are we to assume that the Contractor is responsible for all printing costs and postage to mail all required notices?

Response: **Yes.**

Question 25: Are printers included in the provided computer hardware?

Response: **Yes, OHEP will provide one printer per location.**

Question 26: In Section 3.2H4 you refer to an Independent Audit. Should we presume that the Contractor is responsible for identifying and procuring an auditor and that the scope of the audit is financial records only, or does it involve all aspects of intake, verification, approvals and payments?

Response: **Yes, the Contractor procures the auditor. It only covers financial transactions.**

Question 27: Reference Section 3.4B. Based on your past experience is security staff required in any of the County site facilities as the staff will be in direct contact with applicants and in some cases denying benefits. We understand that the Contractor would be responsible for these costs, but would defer to your experience in this regard for this specific program.

Response: **The decision to provide security staff is strictly up to the Offeror.**

Question 28: Are subcontractors required to contact the Maryland Department of Human Resources for all hiring needs regarding this contract?

Response: **The Contract or Contracts resulting from this RFP are between DHR and the Contractor, not Subcontractor.**

Question 29: Does all recruiting for the Hiring Agreement have to be with entry-level positions?

Response: **Initially, the Hiring Agreement was for entry-level positions, now the Hiring Agreement pertains to all jobs.**

Question 30: What happens if a new hire for the Hiring Agreement does not work out? What is the protocol and/or how do you proceed to get a new person or go outside the system if the person does not work out?

Response: **An employer is not expected to retain staff deemed unsuitable. In those instances when job retention is not salvageable, the employer may be offered other qualified TCA job candidates (when available) or provided a written waiver from DHR allowing the employer to hire whomever they deem suitable for that specific position.**

- Question 31: Who draws the sample for the Fuel Consumption Survey?
- Response:** **The State OHEP office selects the energy suppliers, but the Contractor selects the customer sample. Ten (10) customers are selected for each fuel type.**
- Question 32: What is required in terms of the data collector going out to the specified fuel suppliers? Is the data collected once a year for the winter months, or do they go out monthly to collect?
- Response:** **The data is collected once a year during the month of May. The data collected is for the winter months. Attachment CC outlines the requirements of the data collection. The data elements to be completed on the chart are housing type, address, consumption, actual cost, family size, monthly income, utility name, USPP participant Yes or No, and annual usage.**
- Question 33: If it is suspected that an applicant has allegedly committed fraud, does the Contractor deny them based on that fact, or do they have the right to come back (within 30 days and reapply) subsequent to the reporting of the allegation?
- Response:** **Before requesting a fraud investigation the agency can request additional information to verify the identity of the applicant. The application can be put on a hold status and the processing of the application can be delayed until the agency receives the additional documentation and is satisfied. With this action a benefit does not have to be issued. The application could be denied for not submitting requested information.**
- Question 34: Regarding Requirements Section 3.4(b) References, B-1 references the objective listed in 3.3 and they seem to differ from what is in Section 3.3 There are two missing objectives: Eligibility Determination and USPP Participation. How can we make the objective. If there is no description of them?
- Response:** **Eligibility determination is directly related to the objective of providing monetary benefits to reduce a family's energy burden. USPP participation is tied to helping the customer understand his/her financial responsibility for household energy needs.**
- Question 35: I could only access Attachment A Cover Page, I could not retrieve any financial or budget pages. How can I access the entire document?

Response: The remaining budget pages are tabs located at the bottom of the screen as part of the Document and are accessed by clicking the cursor on the Respective tab.

Question 36: Why are we doing budgets for periods not within the scope of the program year (July 1st through June 30th)?

Response: This Contract(s) will begin on or about September 1, 2009 and end on or about August 31, 2014 – the budget must reflect this time frame.

Question 37: Will the transcript and/or questions and answers be available on the website?

Response: Yes, the transcript and all questions and responses will be posted on the DHR website and eMaryland marketplace.

Question 38: Forms and attachments are marked and filed together in the back of the RFP, not following the requested page?

Response: Yes.

Question 39: Should we (the vendors) have knowledge of what our “Contract Number” is? It is requested on several forms.

Response: Yes, the Agency Contract Number is the Proposal Number as stated on the Notice To Vendors/Contractors. The Contract Number is FIA/OHEP-09-002-S, and the Proposal is entitled: Administration of the Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) and the Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP).

Question 40: I notice the elimination of a Monthly Financial Status Report from the Deliverable section (3.5) and it is not included in the Fiscal Reporting section (3.2 H) or the Program Reporting section (3.2 I). Just want to verify this report is no longer a requirement under the new contract period.

Response: A monthly Administrative Expenditure Report is not required as part of this Request for Proposals. Please note, however, that a Monthly Benefit Status Report (Attachment BB) is required.

Question 41: Living Wage Requirements (Attachment Q): I would like to verify that, if the Bidder/Offeror is a non-profit organization, they are exempt from Maryland’s Living Wage Law.

Response: **Yes, Non-Profit organizations are exempt from Maryland's Living Wage Law.**

Question 42: In regards to the OHEP 5 year plan, one of the questions asked is for us to list all contracts with the State of Maryland. We receive a lot of State funds. Some of which are made directly between us and the State and then some of which are made between the State and then passed to us, but we still consider them State funds. Do we need to include all of these funds for the last five years or only the ones that were/are between the State and us?

Response: **Each Offeror is to provide a list of all contracts with any entity of the State of Maryland that it is currently performing or which have been completed within the last five years. Contracts are agreement made directly between the State of Maryland and the Offeror. Funds received directly or indirectly from the State of Maryland, or passed through their agency, are not considered contracts.**

Question 43: In the instructions of the Financial Proposal, Line 51 states 'for allowable costs per mile, use \$.55; however, on each Year's spreadsheet, Line F114 (cost per mile) =\$.48. I would like to verify the amount we are to use - \$.55 or \$.48?

Response: **The correct amount to use for mileage reimbursement is \$.55 per mile.**

Question 44: Section 3.2.1.2. states that the Monthly Outreach Log is due at the end of each month on the final working day, Section 3.5 #14 states the Monthly Outreach Log is due on the 1st Friday of each month for the prior month. Need clarification on when the Monthly Outreach Log is due to State OHEP Office.

Response: **The Annual Outreach log is due August 15th of each year.**

Question 45: Attachment A-1 for the sample invoice, do we complete the information and place it on our letterhead? Would this be accepted?

Response: **Attachment A-1 is a sample provided for information purposes, and is to be completed "on your letterhead" and submitted monthly by the awarded vendors after contracts are executed.**

Question 46: Attachments F, G, H, I, etc... - Minority Business Enterprise – We are a non-profit and we do not have any sub contractors – the sub contractors have contracts through the OHEP office. So how do we complete these forms?

Response: **The 1% MBE subcontract participation goal applies to all Offerors, including Non-Profits. Please read RFP Section 2.31 and Section 2.32 C and F.**

